



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Hudson River—New York Bight Ecosystem Team

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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Conservation in a Region Filled with Ecological Challenges



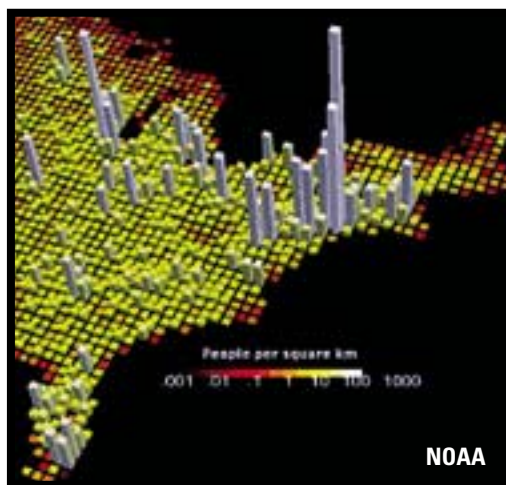
From the Adirondacks and rural Vermont to Cape May, New Jersey, the Hudson River—New York Bight (HR-NYB) ecosystem is incredibly diverse. Today tens of millions of residents live in the watershed, using it for recreation, commerce, housing, and our American lifestyle.

Despite dense human population, valuable fish and wildlife habitats exist in the ecosystem. The area is vital to migratory birds, anadromous fish, and several species protected by the federal and State endangered species laws. The watershed includes streams and rivers, estuarine and freshwater wetlands, upland forests, grasslands, and barrier beach habitats. Several U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service offices within the ecosystem work to protect these resources. These offices comprise the Hudson River—New York Bight Ecosystem Team (Team).

Above: Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge looking out toward Great Bay, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Atlantic City skyline on Absecon Island.

Left: Focus area of the Hudson River-New York Bight Ecosystem Team. The Bight is the bend in the Atlantic Ocean coastline and the water body enclosed within it.

Below: Population density of the eastern United States. New York, with a population of approximately 17 million, is the sixth largest city in the world and is the most populated coastal region of the United States. Fifty percent of the U.S. population lives within 50 miles of the coast; about 80% within 200 miles.



Photos Gene Nieminen / USFWS, NJFO

Piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*)

Piping Plover Recovery

The piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*) is listed as Threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. Its recovery presents a classic conflict between people and wildlife. More than 50% of our nation's population lives along the coasts; coastal development and recreation can have devastating effects on piping plover survival. Tire tracks from off-road vehicle travel become canyons to a young plover. Human food litter attracts plover predators such as raccoons, skunks, foxes, and domestic pets. Crows and gulls join the gang of opportunists hoping to gobble up plover chicks.

In 2003, the Team made piping plover recovery its top priority. The Team's Law Enforcement Offices play an important role in plover protection. Grant partnerships are also paying off: combined nesting pairs in New York and New Jersey have increased from 401 in 2000 to more than 500 in 2004.

The HR-NYB Ecosystem Team and How It Works

The Team's geographic focus is the watershed of the HR-NYB. Identifying priority fish and wildlife issues (e.g., recovery of an endangered species, invasive plant management, fish passage) the team shares ideas and encourages coordination. The Team is committed to using its regulatory, technical, and management tools to conserve fish and wildlife resources under our public trust in collaboration with Service, private, local, and State partners.

Bog Turtle Recovery

The secretive bog turtle (*Clemmys muhlenbergii*) has been listed as a federally threatened species since 1997. Subject to illegal collection, bog turtles are also extremely sensitive to habitat changes and have suffered greatly from habitat loss and degradation. Wetland filling, fragmentation and drainage, invasion of plant species such as common reed (*Phragmites australis*) and purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), natural succession, and alteration of natural drainage patterns are impacting the species.



Photo R.G. Tucker Jr. / USFWS

Bog turtle (*Clemmys muhlenbergii*).



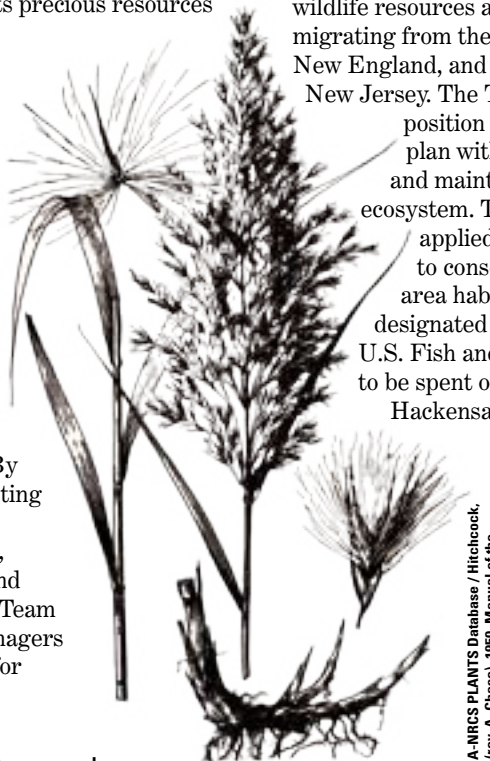
Photo Gene Nieminen / USFWS, NJFO

In the Hackensack Meadowlands viewing the Sawmill Creek Wildlife Management Area (From left to right) Clifford Day Supervisor New Jersey Field Office, Marty McHugh Director New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, and Marvin Moriarty Director of the Northeast Region of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service,

Invasive Species

One of the significant challenges for natural resource managers everywhere is the increasing number and variety of invasive species. These plants, animals, and other organisms degrade native habitats. Managing them diverts precious resources from other tasks.

The New York—New Jersey Harbor has been a huge doorway for the introduction of invasive plant and animal species. Team members share resources to make control of species such as non-native *Phragmites* and purple loosestrife as effective as possible. By evaluating and supporting techniques such as prescribed burning, mowing, herbicides, and biological control, the Team provides resource managers with a better toolbox for control.



Common reed
(*Phragmites australis*)

Hackensack Meadowlands, New Jersey

The Hackensack Meadowlands, an 8,450-acre wetland and upland complex just seven miles from Manhattan, supports an estuarine system valuable to fish and wildlife resources and vital for birds migrating from the Hudson River Valley, New England, and coastal Long Island and New Jersey. The Team supported a staff position that developed a vision plan with goals for achieving and maintaining a healthy ecosystem. This vision is being applied to partnerships working to conserve and restore area habitats. Congress has designated additional funds to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to be spent on restoration in the Hackensack Meadowlands.

USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Hitchcock, A.S. (rev. A. Chase). 1950. Manual of the Grasses of the United States. USDA Misc. Publ. No. 200. Washington, DC.

The Team continues to support bog turtle recovery as one of its top priorities. The Team has supported a number of projects over the years including baseline surveys, radio-telemetry data of habitat use, blood sample collection for genetics studies, and habitat restoration. Bog turtle habitat restoration efforts have included selective grazing by cattle and goats, removal of woody vegetation, and invasive plant management to create and restore bog turtle habitat.

The Hudson River—New York Bight Ecosystem Team

The HR-NYB Ecosystem Team member offices are listed below. For office fact sheets, office locations, and other information visit the website of the Service's Northeast Region at <http://northeast.fws.gov/>

Service Offices Contributing to the HR-NYB Ecosystem Team

Cape May National Wildlife Refuge

Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge

Great Swamp—Wallkill River—Shawangunk National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Law Enforcement—Elizabeth, New Jersey

Law Enforcement—Valley Stream, New York

Long Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Long Island Ecological Services Field Office

New Jersey Ecological Services Field Office

New York Ecological Services Field Office

Northeast Regional Office

Southern New England—New York Bight Coastal Ecosystem Program